

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6931

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 2367

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VT, SA

SUBJ: VISIT OF VATICAN OFFICIAL TO SAUDI ARABIA

REF : ROME 5814

SUMMARY: JERUSALEM NOT DISCUSSED DURING CARDINAL PIGNEDOLI'S
VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA, BUT THIS DUE TO CARDINAL'S ADEPTNESS
IN TURNING DISCUSSION AWAY FROM SUBJECT OF GREATEST INTEREST
TO SAUDI HOSTS. WELL PUBLICIZED VISIT PROBABLY SUCCESSFUL FROM
VATICAN VIEWPOINT BUT LESS SO FROM SAUDI. SOME RESENTMENT AT
HIGH LEVEL ATTENTION GIVEN CARDINAL DISCERNABLE AMONG LOCAL
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ULEMA.

1. AMBASSADOR RAISED SUBJECT OF CARDINAL PIGNEDOLI'S VISIT IN APRIL 30 MEETING WITH MINSTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SAQQAF, NOTING HE UNDERSTOOD THAT JERUSALEM HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED DURING THE CARDINAL'S CONVERSATIONS WITH THE KING AND OTHERS. SAQQAF (WHO WAS NOT IN RIYADH DURING THE VISIT) REGISTERED SURPRISE SINCE JERUSALEM WAS THE PRIMARY TOPIC THAT THE KING HAD HOPED TO DISCUSS WITH THE VATICAN EMISSARY. SAQQAF TELEPHONED RIYADH AND TALKED WITH ROYAL ADVISOR RASHAD PHARAON (WHO WAS PRESENT DURING MEETING WITH THE KING.) PHARAON SAID JERUSALEM MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN "DISCUSSED" -- BUT IT WAS NOT THROUGH LACK OF EFFORT ON SAUDI SIDE. KING FAISAL RAISED JERUSALEM SEVERAL TIMES, BUT IN EACH INSTANCE PIGNEDOLI TURNED THE CONVERSATION IN ANOTHER DIRECTION. VISIT THEREFORE, IS NOT VIEWED BY THE SAUDIS AS QUITE THE SUCCESS THE VATICAN SEES IT.

2. CARDINAL PIGNEDOLI'S VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA RECEIVED EXTENSIVE NEWSPAPER, RADIO AND TELEVISION COVERAGE; THROUGHOUT HIS VISIT, HE RECEIVED FIRST-CLASS TREATMENT AS COMPARED WITH HONORS AND ATTENTION GIVEN TO OTHER FOREIGN DIGNITARIES. UNIQUE FOR THE KINGDOM WERE PRESS AND TELEVISION SHOTS OF PIGNEDOLI DRESSED IN CLERICAL GARB WHILE MEETING WITH THE KING.

3. WE HAVE HEARD THAT SOME OF ULEMA ARE NOT PLEASED BY THE ATTENTIONS GIVEN TO A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE VATICAN. WE NOTE THAT THE PRESS CARRIED SEVERAL STORIES DURING THE CARDINAL'S VISIT DEPLORING THE CONDITION OF MUSLIMS IN ETHIOPIA AND COMMENTARY (PROBABLY OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED) WARNING THAT SAUDI ARABIA CANNOT BE INDIFFERENT TO THEIR FATE. VATICAN CAN WELL BE PLEASED WITH PIGNEDOLI VISIT BUT WOULD BE OPTIMISTIC TO EXPECT NEW EAR IN MUSLIM/SAUDI-CATHOLIC RELATIONS TO FLOW FROM IT, PARTICULARLY IF SAUDIS CONSIDER VATICAN TO BE RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT CLOSEST TO KING FAISAL'S HEART--JERUSALEM. AKINS

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